R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 012 567 FL 000 504

THE NATIVE AS AN AIDE IN THE CLASSROOM.

BY- ABRAHAM, JOAN CALDWELL, GENELLE

PUB DATE MAY 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.16 4P.

DESCRIPTORS- *CURRICULUM ENRICHMENT, *MODERN LANGUAGES, *TEACHER AIDES, *TEACHER EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, *SECONDARY SCHOOLS, CULTURAL CONTEXT, INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT, LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION, TEAM TEACHING,

THE NATIVE SPEAKER WHO SERVES AS A TEACHER AIDE CAN PLAY A DECISIVE ROLE IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAM IF THE COOPERATING TEACHER CAREFULLY PLANS HIS WORK BUT ALLOWS FOR FLEXIBILITY IN SCHEDULING HIS DUTIES. AS A RESOURCE PERSON THE AIDE CAN LEND AUTHENTICITY TO THE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE, IN BOTH SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL ENRICHMENT. HE CAN PROVIDE IMMEDIATE DRILL REINFORCEMENT FOR THE STRUCTURES TAUGHT, LISTENING OPPORTUNITIES AT ALL LEVELS, AND INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP PRACTICE TO HELP STUDENTS REMEDY WEAKNESSES AND PROBLEMS. IN ADDITION, HE CAN PROVIDE VALUABLE HELP TO THE TEACHER WHO MAY WISH TO IMPROVE HIS OWN ORAL MASTERY OF THE TARGET LANGUAGE. THIS DOCUMENT APPEARED IN THE "DFL BULLETIN," VOLUME 6, NUMBER 4, MAY 1967. (AB)

ED012567

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

1 FL 000 504

THE NATIVE AS AN AIDE IN THE CLASSROOM*

by Joan Abraham
Caesar Rodney High School
Camden-Wyoming, Delaware

and Genelle Caldwell
Department of Public Instruction
Dover, Delaware

The task of creating opportunities for students to experience and practice actively authentic language and cultural patterns of a people in a realistic setting within a foreign language classroom is a constant concern. Even though such devices as ETC, films, slides, electronic equipment and magazines help create this sense of realism and free the teacher to engage students individually and in small groups in use of language, the human aide, the native, has a decisive role to play in the teaching process. It is with his contribution to foreign language learning in the classroom that this article is concerned. The observations related are based on working with an aide, Jose Avila from Panama, in Spanish classes in the Caesar Rodney and Dover High Schools in the State of Delaware during the school year, 1966-67.

The foreign aide in the classroom can be a rich part of the language program. The effectiveness of his contribution will be for the most part in direct proportion to the quality of the teacher who directs his program. The cooperating teacher, therefore, must be a person who sees possibilities in such a program, accepts it as a challenge, and welcomes the aide warmly to his post. From the outset, the cooperating teacher must develop a good aide-student relationship by preparing students for the advantages they will enjoy before the aide arrives. Students should be advised that they are good will ambassadors and that their reception of the aide, their classroom activities and their behavior will influence his impression of this country.

Most importantly, also, the cooperating teacher must see his role as that of closely directing the work of the aide. This means, of course, careful planning. Providing direct native conversational contact limited to the student's language experience prevents a feeling of frustration in the first stages of aide-student relationships. Practice does not necessarily make for perfection. Good practice, however, helps to make good students; very good practice helps to make very good students. A foreign aide in the classroom gives the alert teacher an opportunity for very good practice on points needing immediate reinforcement.

The psychological effect of animate, rather than inanimate, practice is noticeable. The student with a poor ear can work with an inanimate source very diligently and keep repeating his mistake because he simply does not hear it. His intentions are good, but, unless care is taken, it is easy for him to compound his error. The skilled teacher tries not to permit this; he, of course, wants to be sure that the pupil has the correct sound before there is much drill. With a large class, this is not easy, and the correction of individual students often necessitates slowing down the entire class. In such a case, the foreign aide is of supreme value. The teacher gives the aide drills for particular weaknesses and he works with the student until the sound has been mastered. He also works with small groups on special problems, thereby helping students get more individualized attention when they need it. After preliminary sessions, prepared tapes are easily repeatable and drills meaningful.

Overlearning language skills is essential to retention and this requires frequent review at short intervals. This is much easier with the teacher and his aide and far less dull for students. Great care is needed, however, because the foreign aide is often unaware of the structure of his language as a foreign language. He can be, therefore, rather intolerant of mistakes at a low level. If he thinks that his native tongue is a very easy language, he may not be inclined to see the need for repetitive drill.

Opportunities for listening at all levels of language learning cannot be excessive. The dialogue type of repetition is particularly effective with the aide as are the simple and the difficult pattern drills. Listening at third and fourth year levels involves a broader

*This experimental program was organized by the Foreign Language Content Area of the State Department of Public Instruction. José Avila came to Delaware under the sponsorship of the Delaware/Panama Partners of the Alliance.

AIDE (Cont.)

range of content. At these levels the aide conducts poetry and drama groups and leads discussions and conversations on cultural aspects of his native country. Nonetheless, here too, the teacher checks frequently to be sure that the basic facts are being covered and understood, that the cake is there as well as the frosting. Preplanning with the aide at all levels is very important.

There is great temptation for the modern foreign language teacher to give papers to the aide for correction. This should be avoided or limited so that the aide can help students develop good style in advanced courses. Furthermore, a teacher who does his own daily corrections has a much clearer idea of what points need future practice and reinforcement.

Students give great credulence to the authenticity of what the foreign aide says. Among the film strips used was one from the aide's home country. Over one-third of this strip has shots of natives with rings in their noses. Students are warned, of course, that enrichment materials often seek the unusual and stress it out of all proportion to the true life of the country. The pupils realized this far better when the aide discussed the distorted aspects about life in his country. A lively discussion followed between the aide and the third-year students concerning possible distortions that might appear in a film strip made about this country; a few days later, they narrowed the discussion to aspects relative to their own state.

It may be that the greatest contribution which the aide can make is to classroom teachers themselves. He should be encouraged to assist teachers in improving their own speech and serve as one with whom they can practice the language they teach. So often the language teacher who works primarily in the lower levels of study loses his facility as time passes. Working with an aide gives him the opportunity to strengthen continually his own skills. In this instance, the aide works each day with a part-time Spanish teacher during his planning period.

It should be stressed that an aide is here not only to contribute but also to enjoy his experience, to learn more about American culture and language, and to enrich his teaching ability. Arrangements should be made so that he immediately settles into a comfortable home environment. It may be desirable for him to live in several homes for a month or two. This not only enables him to witness several aspects of American life, but it is often easier to find host families for shorter durations. In addition to helping the aide find a satisfying community life, the cooperating teacher has the responsibility of supervising the aide's orientation to the school system. He should understand the guidance and homeroom systems, the program of studies as well as student and faculty organizations and activities. He must be included in school and social functions.

Flexibility is the key to building a good program for an aide in the school. This helper started by spending the first semester in one school in the mornings and in another in the afternoons. This limited the scope of his experience in both schools. More important, it meant that all of the Spanish students did not have the opportunity to work with him. The teachers are now experimenting with alternating full days between the two schools. This has proved to be the more satisfactory system because all Spanish students can benefit from his teaching.

One must keep in mind that the aide comes ready to share all that he has in learning and experiences and that his contribution can not take place without carefully selected opportunities and guidance. In turn, students, teachers and community must share warmly their life with him.

"If the student is to be taught to speak the foreign language in a way which will communicate his own meaning to the native speakers of that language, he must learn more than structures and vocabulary. He must learn to share in the experiences which native speakers associate with vocabulary and expressions. Ideally, this would involve plunging each student for a certain period into the active life of a community which speaks the language. As this is possible for very few of our students, the teacher must be conscious of the fact that words and expressions of the foreign language isolated from a cultural context can give false impressions of meaning, and if learned in this way, can prove to be very poor tools of communication with a native speaker. The teacher should see that materials he uses are culturally authentic and that the student is surrounded as much as possible by pictures, magazines, news items, films, music, songs, and other aids to understanding the life and ways of thought of the people who speak the language."

Wilga M. Rivers

(in *The Psychologist and the Foreign-Language Teacher*, U. of Chicago Press, 1964).

Annual Meeting
Department of Foreign Languages

N.E.A. Convention

Minneapolis, Minnesota
July 4, 1967
2:00 - 4:30 P.M.
Minnehaha Room
Convention Center

Presiding, Professor George Smith, Indiana University;
President, D.F.L.

"Projects for the D.F.L."
George Smith, President, Department of Foreign Languages.

"Flexible Scheduling and the Foreign Language Curriculum"
Robert L. Politzer, Professor of Education and
Romance Linguistics, Stanford University.

Discussion

"Using Visuals in Foreign Language Teaching"
Robert Spindler, Edina Public Schools, Edina, Minnesota.